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## **STATE OF EDUCATION IN UGANDA**

The Government of Uganda is committed to improving the quality of education in its schools as shown by the initiatives put in place in different areas like curriculum review, teacher training, better monitoring and assessment systems, efficient and effective management, and increased resource allocation. In the last twenty years (1990 to 2010), the government has embarked on ambitious projects geared at improving the quality of education. These include: review of the curriculum which led to, among other things, the introduction of a thematic curriculum in lower primary school; reforming and restructuring the Education Standards Agency into a fully fledged Directorate of Education Standards in the Ministry of Education and Sports; training more teachers; constructing more classrooms and laboratories; securing more furniture; and purchasing more training materials like textbooks and laboratory equipment. Some statistics suffice here: in 2004 Uganda had 126,000 trained primary school teachers as compared to 81,564 of 1996; in 2003, Uganda had 70,000 classrooms as compared to 45,000 in 1997; in 2003 the textbook-child ratio was 3:1 for Primary 3 and 4 as compared to 37:1 in 1993 (Source: The National Report on the Development of Education in Uganda at the beginning of the 21st Century, August 2004).

In these efforts, the Government of Uganda has collaborated with many agencies including non-governmental organizations like AVSI and the Permanent Centre for Education. Three activities are worth mentioning here that are of particular importance to AVSI and the PCE: in October 2008, the Department of Teacher Education, Ministry of Education and Sports, AVSI and the PCE organized two refresher trainings for the principals and deputy principals of all the Primary Teachers' Colleges and National Teachers' Colleges in the country on the theme 'Education as Introduction to total reality'; in December 2009, another workshop on the theme 'Educate while working' was organized for the same people.

These workshops were crucial in helping the participants rediscover their calling. Evidence of this was the testimony of Mr. Arinaitwe John Willy, the Chairperson of the Principals Association of Uganda (PAU), at the closing of the December 2009 workshop. He observed that the workshop had helped him to identify gaps in his work: what he had not done well and what he had to improve on. "The three workshops have been an opportunity for a self-audit, a personal evaluation on how well I had fared as a principal tutor," he observed. "They helped me to understand the meaning of authority, not just as power but as the possibility to grow and cause growth. This has helped me to become not just a better principal, but also a better human being."

The event on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2010 is very important for the PCE. First, it will be a moment of reflection on the contribution AVSI and the PCE have made to quality education over the years, particularly in the last three years (2007 to 2010); secondly, it will be an

opportunity to learn a lot from the experiences of the guest speakers – Hon. Mario Mauro (Member of the European Parliament), Hon. Geraldine Namirembe Bitamazire (Minister of Education and Sports, Republic of Uganda) and Mr. Augustine Omare-Okurut (Secretary General, Uganda National Commission for UNESCO), who have all been involved in quality education initiatives in their different capacities. Finally, it will affirm the importance of the PCE as a meeting point where different people share ideas on any topic of public concern.